There were many activities that I endeavored to participate in this summer. Of them the most arduous was the compilation of books and articles that I read for both the workshop I presented, the one workshop that did not fly, and the excel worksheet I developed. The more I read the more I feel like I do not know anything when it comes to reading and that there is still so very much more to learn.

The workshops were both going to be a great undertaking. The first, about book clubs, was already started by Darlene, a co-student in my class. She had presented this topic in a prior class and I thought it would be a superb presentation for a group of elementary teachers. The second workshop, on alternative assessments, was also quite the undertaking, but a springboard from the course I took this last spring with Professor Lawrence. I had the small group participate in several activities from think-pair-share to online activities where they discovered their own learning styles and how to adapt materials to their styles and other styles. Not only did I utilize modalities of learning, but Gardner’s multiple intelligences as well. While I was extremely nervous about the presentation, I did discover that I had planned too much, which is better than not enough, and that the activities that involved sharing and interacting with technology went over the best.

I also attended a workshop given by Divonna Steibeck, who promotes the use of questioning in comprehension activities for students k-12. It was an interesting workshop where I found that I was already using many of the activities in my class already, but there were some new and unique activities that I will try this semesters. One of those is asking the author why they chose to include certain passages or works within the text. Another is the use of vocabulary study within the context of the reading period in order to facilitate better understanding of words while reading. I’ve purchased the Words Their Way book and have started with prefixes this week.

One of the last things I did this summer was meet with one of the elementary teachers at Eisenhower Elementary. She has a first grade class and we went over the Dibbels data from the students kindergarten year. It was interesting to discuss and interpret the data and it was also interesting that she already had knowledge of the students and when I pointed out where some had a lack of background information she was quick to cite that these were the students who were either ELL or from limited economic status.

I have also been in close contact with several of the high school teachers and we have discussed the use of some vocabulary development – in English and Math. Along with this we have discussed strategies for reading and activating prior knowledge and making connections. Many of the activities and strategies that I have discussed with the high school teachers are also viable with the elementary students, but with varying degrees of difficulty.

One other person with whom I have been in contact is Margie from Upper Adams school district. She is a math special educator at the middle school, which ranges from sixth through eighth grade. She will be assessing students in their writing and reading abilities and I will be assisting her with interpreting the data that she gathers and how to present it to the teachers and what they can do to best meet the student’s needs. Since the students will range in the three grade levels, it should assist with my data analysis at both the elementary and high school level.

This last week I also shared with my students the findings from the pre-assessment I gave them in addition to going over their prior PSSA and 4sight scores and what all this information meant. Some students were really surprised, as was I, while others were not at all surprised and knew that they did not even try when given the standardized tests.

While I’m really nervous about getting all the activities done through this semester, I believe that I am well on my way to a successful implementation as a Reading Specialist in my school.